

A Letter, containing some Remarks on the two  
Papers, writ by his late Majesty King Charles the  
Second, concerning Religion.

I R,

**S** I thank you for the *two Royal Papers*, that you have sent me: I had heard of them before, but now we have them so well attested, that there is no hazard of being deceived by a false Copy: you expect that in return, I should let you know, what Impression they have made upon me. I pay all the reverence that is due to a *Crown'd Head*, even in Ashes; to which I will never be wanting: far less am I capable of suspecting the *Royal Attestation that accompanies them*; of the truth of which I take it for granted no man doubts; but I must crave leave to tell you, that I am confident, the *late King* only copied them, and that they are not of his composing: for as they have nothing of that *free Air*, with which he expressed himself; so there is a Contexture in them, that does not look like a *Prince*; and the beginning of the *first* shewes it was the effect of a *Conversation*, and was to be communicated to another: so that I am apt to think they were composed by another, and were so well relished by the *late King*, that he thought fit to keep them, in order to his examining them more particularly: and that he was prevailed with to *Copy* them, lest a Paper of that nature might have been made a crime, if it had been found about him written by another hand: and I could name one or two Persons, who as they were able enough to compose such *Papers*, so had power enough over his Spirit to engage him to *Copy* them, and to put themselves out of danger by restoring the *Original*.

You ought to address your self to the *learned Divines* of our *Church*, for an

answer to such things in them as puzzle you, and not to one that has not the honour to be of that *Body*; and that has now carried a *Sword* for some time, and employs the leisure that at any time he enjoys, rather in *Philosophical* and *Mathematical Enquiries*, than in matters of *Controversy*. There is indeed one Consideration that determined me more easily to comply with your desires, which is; my having had the honour to *discourse* copiously of those matters with the *late King* himself: and he having proposed to me some of the particulars that I find in those *Papers*, & I having said several things to him, in answer to those *Heads*, which he offered to me only as *Objections*, with which he seemed fully satisfied, I am the more willing to communicate to you, that which I took the liberty to lay before his *late Majesty* on several occasions: the particulars on which he insisted in discourse with me, were the *usefulness of a Law without a Judge*, and the *necessity of an infallible Tribunal to determine Controversies*: to which he added, the many *Sects* that were in England, which seemed to be a necessary consequence of the *Liberty* that every one took to interpret the *Scriptures*: and he often repeated that of the *Church of England* arguing, from the obligation to obey the *Church*, against the *Sectaries*, which he thought was of no force, unless they allowed more Authority to the *Church* than they seemed willing to admit, in their *Disputes* with the *Church* of Rome. But upon this whole Matter I will offer you some *Reflections*, that will, I hope, be of as great weight with you, as they are with my self.

I. All Arguments that prove upon such general Considerations, that there ought to be an *Infallible Judge*

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named by *Christ*, and clothed with his *Authority*, signify nothing, unless it can be shewed us, in what *Texts of Scripture* that nomination is to be found; and till that is shewed, they are only *Arguments* brought to prove that *Christ ought to have done somewhat that he has not done*. So these are in effect so many *Arguments* against *Christ*, unless it appears that he has authorised such a *Judge*: therefore the right way to end this dispute, is, to shew where such a *Constitution* is authorised: So that the most that can be made of this is, that it amounts to a *favorable presumption*.

II. It is a very unreasonable thing for us to form *Presumptions*, of what *is*, or *ought to be*, from Inconveniences that do arise, in case that such things are not: for we may carry this so far, that it will not be easie to stop it. It seems more suitable to the infinite Goodness of *God*, to communicate the knowledge of himself to all Mankind, and to furnish every Man with such assistances as will certainly prevail over him. It seems also reasonable to think, that so perfect a Saviour as *Jesus Christ* was, should have shewed us a *certain Way*, and yet consistent with the *free Use of our Faculties*, of avoiding all *sin*: nor is it very easy to imagine, that it should be a reproach on his *Gospel*, if there is not an *Infallible Preservative against Error*, when it is acknowledged, that there is *no infallible Preservative against Sin*: for it is certain, that the one Damns us more *Infallibly*, than the other.

III. Since *Presumptions* are so much insisted on, to prove what things must be appointed by *Christ*; it is to be considered, that it is also a reasonable *Presumption*, that if such a *Court* was appointed by him, it must be done in such plain terms that there can be no room to question the meaning of them: and since this is the hinge upon which all other matters turn, it

ought to be expressed so particularly, in *whom* it is vested, that there should be no occasion given to dispute, whether it is in *One Man* or in *A Body*; and if in a *Body*, whether in the Majority, or in the two thirds, or in the whole *Body* unanimously agreeing: in short, the Chief thing in all Governments being the *Nature and Power of the Judges*, those are always distinctly specified; and therefore if these things are not specified in the *Scriptures*, it is at least a strong *Presumption*, that *Christ did not intend to authorize such Judges*.

IV. There were several Controversies raised among the *Churches* to which the *Apostles* writ, as appears by the *Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and Colossians*, yet the *Apostles* never make use of those passages that are pretended for this Authority to put an end to those Controversies; which is a shrewd *Presumption*, that they did not understand them in that sense in which the *Church of Rome* does now take them. Nor does *St. Paul* in the directions that he gives to *Church-men* in his *Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, reckon this of *submitting to the directions of the Church* for one, which he could not have omitted, if this be the true meaning of those disputed passages: and yet he has not one word sounding that way, which is very different from the directions which one possessed with the present, view that the *Church of Rome* has of this matter must needs have given.

V. There are some things very expressly taught in the *N. Testament*, such as the *rules of a Good Life*, the *Use of the Sacraments*, the *addressing our selves to God for Mercy and Grace*, thro the *Sacrifice* that *Christ* offered for us on the *Cross*, and the *Worshipping him as God*, the *Death*, *Resurrection* and *Ascension of Jesus Christ*, the *Resurrection of our Bodies and Life Everlasting*: by which it is apparent, that we

we are set beyond doubt in those matters; if then there are other passages more obscure concerning other matters, we must Conclude, that these are not of that Consequence, otherwise they would have been as plainly revealed as the others are; but above all, if the *Authority of the Church* is delivered to us in *disputable terms*, that is a just prejudice against it, since it is a thing of such Consequence, that it ought to have been revealed in a way so very clear and past all dispute.

VI. If it is a presumption for particular persons to judge concerning Religion, which must be still referred to the *Priests* & other Guides in sacred matters; this is a good Argument to oblige all Nations to continue in the *Established Religion*, whatever it may happen to be; and above all others, it was a convincing Argument in the mouths of the *Jews* against our *Saviour*. He pretended to be the *Messias*, and proved it both by the *prophecies* that were accomplished in him, and by the *Miracles* that he wrought: as for the *Prophecies*, the Reasons urged by the Church of *Rome* will conclude much stronger, that such dark Passages as those of the Prophets were, ought not to be interpreted by *Particular persons*, but that the Exposition of these must be referred to the *Priests* and *Sanhedrin*, it being expressly provided in their law (*Deut. 17. 8.*) *That when controversies arose, concerning any cause that was too intricate, they were to go to the place which God should choose, and to the Priests of the tribe of Levi, & to the judge in those days, & that they were to declare what was right, & so their decision all were obliged to submit, under pain of death:* so that by this it appears, that the *Priests* in the *Jewish Religion* were authorised in so extraordinary a manner, that I dare say the Church of *Rome* would not wish for a more formal testimony on her behalf: As for our *Saviour's Mi-*

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*racles*, these were not sufficient neither, unless his doctrine was first found to be good: since *Moses* had expressly warned the people (*Deut. 13. 1.*) *That if a Prophet came and taught them to follow after other Gods, they were not to obey him, tho he wrought miracles to prove his Mission, but were to put him to death:* So a *Jew* saying, that *Christ*, by making himself one with his father, brought in the worship of another God, might well pretend that he was not obliged to yield to the authority of our *Saviour's Miracles*, without taking cognizance of his doctrine, and of the *Prophecies* concerning the *Messias*, and in a word, of the whole matter. So that, if these *Reasonings* are now good against the *Reformation*, they were as strong in the mouths of the *Jews* against our *Saviour*: and from hence we see, that the authority that seems to be given by *Moses* to the *Priests*, must be understood with some Restrictions; since we not only find the Prophets, and *Jeremy* in particular, opposing themselves to the whole body of them, but we see likewise, that for some considerable time before our *Saviour's* dayes, not only many ill-grounded traditions had got in among them, by which the vigour of the moral law was much enervated, but likewise they were also universally possessed with a false notion of their *Messias*; so that even the *Apostles* themselves had not quite shaken off those Prejudices at the time of our *Saviour's Ascension*. So that, here a Church, that was still the Church of God, that had the appointed means of the *Expiation of their sins*, by their *Sacrifices* and *Washings*, as well as by their *Circumcision*, was yet under great and fatal Errors, from which particular persons had no way to extricate themselves, but by examining the Doctrine and texts of *Scripture*, and by judging of them according to the Evidence of Truth, and the force & freedom of their Faculties.

VII. It seems Evident, that the passage [*Tell the Church*] belongs only to the *Reconciling of Differences*: that of [*Binding & Loosing*], according to the use of those terms among the *Laws*, signifies only an *Authority* that was given to the *Apostles*, of giving Precepts, by which men were to be obliged to such Duties, or set at liberty from them: and [*the gates of Hell not prevailing against the Church*] signifies only, that the *Christian Religion* was never to come to an end, or to perish: & that of [*Christ's being with the Apostles to the end of the world*] imports only a special *Conduct & Protection* which the *Church* may alwayes expect, but as the promise, *I will not leave thee nor forsake thee*; that belongs to every *Christian*, does not import an *infallibility*: no more does the other: And for those passages concerning [*the Spirit of God* *that searches all things*] it is plain, that in them *St. Paul* is treating of the *Divine inspiration*, by which the *Christian Religion* was then opened to the world; which he sets in opposition to the *wisdom or Philosophy* of the *Greeks*; so that as all those passages come far short of proving that for which they are alleged, it must at least be acknowledged, that they have not an evidence great enough to prove so important a truth, as some would evince by them; since 'tis a matter of such vast consequence, that the proofs for it must have an undeniable Evidence.

VIII. In the matters of *Religion* two things are to be considered, first, the accounts that we must give to God, and the *Rewards* that we expect from him: and in this every man must answer for the sincerity of his heart, in examining divine Matters, and the following what (upon the best enquiries that one could make) appeared to be true: and with relation to this, there is no need of a *Judge*: for in that Great Day every

one must answer to God according to the talents that he had, and all will be saved according to their Sincerity; and with relation to that judgement, there is no need of any other Judge but God. A *Second* view of *Religion*, is as it is a *Body* united together, & by consequence brought under some regulation: and as in all *States*; there are subalterne *Judges*, in whose decisions all must at least acquiesce; tho they are not *infallible*, there being still a sort of an appeal to be made to the *sovereigne* or the supream legislative Body; so the *Church* has a Subalterne *Jurisdiction*: but as the Authority of Inferiour Judges is still regulated, and none but the Legislators themselves have an Authority equal to the Law; So it is not necessary for the preservation of Peace and Order, that the *Decisions* of the *Church* should be *infallible*, or of equal Authority with the *Scriptures*. If Judges do so manifestly abuse their Authority, that they fall into Rebellion and Treason, the subjects are no more bound to consider them; but are obliged to resist them, and to maintain their obedience to their Sovereign; tho' in other matters their Judgment must take place, till they are reversed by the Sovereign. The case of *Religion* being then this, That *Jesus Christ* is the Sovereign of the *Church*; the Assembly of the *Pastors* is only a subalterne *Judge*: if they manifestly oppose themselves to the *Scriptures*, which is the *Law of Christians*, particular persons may be supposed as competent *Judges* of that, as in Civil Matters they may be of the *Rebellion* of the *Judges*, and in that case they are bound still to maintain their Obedience to *Jesus Christ*. In matters *Indifferent*, Christians are bound, for the Preservation of Peace and Unity, to acquiesce in the *Decisions* of the *Church*, and in matters justly doubtful,

or of small Consequence, tho they are convinced that the *Pastors* have erred, yet they are obliged to be silent, and to bear tolerable things, rather than make a Breach: but if it is visible, that the *Pastors* do Rebel against the Sovereign of the Church, I mean *Christ*, the People may put in their Appeal to that great Judge, and there it must lie. If the Church did use this Authority with due Discretion, and the People followed the rules that I have named with humility and modesty, there would be no great danger of many Divisions; but this is the great Secret of the Providence of God, that men are still men, and both *Pastors* and *People* mix their Passions and Interests so with matters of Religion, that as there is a great deal of Sin and Vice still in the World, so that appears in the Matters of Religion as well as in other things: but the ill Consequences of this, tho they are bad enough, yet are not equal to the Effects that Ignorant Superstition, and Obedient zeal have produced in the World, Witness the Rebellions and Wars for establishing the *Worship of Images*; the *Croissades* against the *Saracens*, in which many Millions were lost; those against *Hereticks*, and *Princes* deposed by *Popes*, which lasted for some Ages; and the *Massacre of Paris*, with the Butcheries of the *Duke of Alva* in the last Age, and that of *Ireland* in this: which are, I suppose, far greater Mischiefs than any that can be imagined to arise out of a *Small Diversity of Opinions*: and the present State of this Church, notwithstanding all those unhappy Rents that are in it, is a much more desirable thing, than the gross Ignorance and blind Superstition that reigns in Italy and Spain at this day.

IX. All these reasonings concerning the *Infallibility of the Church* signify nothing, unless we can certainly know, whether we must go for this Decision: for while one Party shewes us, that it must

be in the *Pope*, or is no where, and another Party sayes it Cannot be in the *Pope*, because as many *Popes* have erred, so this is a *Doctrine* that was not known in the Church for a thousand Years, and that has been disputed ever since it was first asserted, we are in the right to believe both sides; first, that if it is not in the *Pope*, it is no where; and then, that certainly it is not in the *Pope*; and it is very Incongruous to say, that there is an *Infallible* Authority in the Church, and that yet it is not certain where one must seek for it; for the one ought to be as clear as the other; and it is also plain, that what *Primacy* so ever *St. Peter* may be supposed to have had, the Scripture sayes not one word of his Successors at Rome; so at least this is not so clear, as a matter of this Consequence must have been, if *Christ* had intended to have lodged such an Authority in that See.

X. It is no less Incongruous to say, that this *Infallibility* is in a *General Council*: for it must be somewhere else, otherwise it will return only to the Church by some Starts, and after long Intervals: and as it was not in the Church, for the first 320 years, so it has not been in the Church these last 120 years. It is plain also, that there is no Regulation given in the *Scriptures*, concerning this great Assembly, who have a right to come & Vote, and what forfeits this right, and what numbers must concur in a Decision, to assure us of the *Infallibility* of the Judgment. It is certain, there was never a *General Council* of all the *Pastors* of the Church: for those of which we have the *Acts*, were only the Councils of the *Roman Empire*, but for those Churches, that were in the South of *Africa*, or the Eastern Parts of *Asia*, beyond the bounds of the *Roman Empire*, as they could not be summoned by the *Emperours* Authority, so it is certain none of them were present: unless one or two of *Persia* at

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Nice, which perhaps was a Corner of *Persia* belonging to the *Empire*; and unless it can be proved, that the *Pope* has an *Absolute Authority* to cut off whole *Churches* from their rights of coming to *Councils*, there has been no *General Council* these last 700. years in the *World*, ever since the *Bishops* of *Rome* have excommunicated all the *Greek Churches* upon such trifling reasons, that their own *Writers* are now ashamed of them; and I will ask no more of a *Man* of a *Competent understanding*, to satisfy him that the *Council of Trent* was no *General Council*, acting in that *Freedom* that became *Bishops*, than that he will be at the pains to read *Card. Pallavicini's History* of that *Council*.

XI. If it is said, that this *Infallibility* is to be sought for in the *Tradition* of the *Doctrine* in all *Ages*, and that every particular *Person* must examine this: here is a *Sea* before him, and instead of examining the small *Book* of the *N. Testament*, he is involved in a study that must cost a *Man* an *Age* to go thro it; and many of the *Ages*, thro which he carries this *Enquiry*, are so dark, and have produced so few *Writers*, at least so few are preserved to our *dayes*, that it is not possible to find out their belief. We find also *Traditions* have varied so much that it is hard to say that there is much weight to be laid on this way of *Conveyance*. A *Tradition* concerning *Matters of Fact* that all *People* see, is less apt to fail than a *Tradition* of *Points* of *Speculation*: and yet we see very near the *Age* of the *Apostles*, contrary *Traditions* touching the *Observation* of *Easter*, from which we must conclude, that either the *Matter of Fact* of one side, or the other, as it was handed down, was not true, or at least that it was not rightly understood. A *Tradition* concerning the *Use* of the *Sacraments* being a visible thing, is more likely to be exact, than a *Speculation* concerning their nature; and yet we find a

*Tradition* of giving *Infants* the *Communion*, grounded on the indispensable necessity of the *Sacrament*, continued a thousand *Years* in the *Church*. A *Tradition* on which the *Christians* founded their *Joy* and *Hope*, is less like to be changed, than a more remote *Speculation*, and yet the first *Writers* of the *Christian Religion* had a *Tradition* handed down to them by those who saw the *Apostles*, of the *Reign* of *Christ* for a thousand *Years* upon *Earth*; and if those who had *Matters* at second hand from the *Apostles*, could be thus mistaken, it is more reasonable to apprehend greater errors at such a distance. A *Tradition* concerning the *Book* of the *Scriptures* is more like to be exact, than the *Exposition* of some passages in it; and yet we find the *Church* did unanimously believe the *Translation* of the 70. *Interpreters* to have been the effect of a miraculous *Inspiration*, till *St. Jerome* examined this *Matter* better, and made a *New Translation* from the *Hebrew Copies*. But which is more than all the rest, It seems plain, that the *Fathers* before the *Council of Nice* believed the *Divinity* of the *Son of God* to be in some sort *Inferiour* to that of the *Father*, and for some *Ages* after the *Council of Nice*, they believed them indeed both equal, but they considered these as two different *Beings*, and only one in *Essence*, as, three men have the same humane *Nature* in common among them; and that as one *Candle* lights another, so the one flowed from another; and after the fifth *Century* the *Doctrine* of one *Individual Essence* was received. If you will be farther informed concerning this, *Father Pezau* will satisfy you as to the first *Period* before the *Council of Nice*, and the learned *Dr. Cudworth* as to the second. In all which particulars it appears, how variable a thing *Tradition* is. And upon the whole *Matter*, the examining *Tradition* thus, is still a searching among *Books*, and here is no living *Judge*.

XII. If then the *Authority* that must decide *Controversies*, lies in the Body of the *Pastors* scattered over the World, which is the last retrenchment, here as many and as great *Scruples* will arise, as we found in any of the former Heads. Two difficulties appear at first view; the one is; *How can we be assured that the present Pastors of the Church are derived in a just Succession from the Apostles*: there are no *Registers* extant that prove this: So that we have nothing for it but some *Histories*, that are so carelessly writ, that we find many mistakes in them in other Matters; and they are so different in the very first links of that Chain, that immediately succeeded the *Apostles*, that the utmost can be made of this is, that here is a *Historical Relation* somewhat doubtful; but here is nothing to found our Faith on: so that if a *Succession* from the *Apostles* times, is necessary to the Constitution of that *Church*, to which we must submit our selves, we know not where to find it: besides that, the *Doctrine* of the necessity of the *Intention* of the Minister to the *Validity* of a *Sacrament*, throws us into inextricable difficulties. I know they generally say, that by the *Intention* they do not mean the inward Acts of the Minister of the *Sacrament*, but only that it must appear by his outward deportment, that he is in earnest going about a *Sacrament*, and not doing a thing in jest; and this appeared so reasonable to me, that I was sorry to find our *Divines* urge it too much: till turning over the *Rubricks* that are at the beginning of the *Missal*, I found upon the head of the *Intention* of the Minister, that if a *Priest* has a Number of *Hosties* before him to be consecrated, and intends to consecrate them all, except one, in that case that Vagrant exception falls upon them all: it not being affixed to any one, and it is defined that he consecrates none at all. Here it is plain, that the secret *Acts* of

a *Priest* can defeat the *Sacrament*: so that this overthrows all certainty concerning a *Succession*: But besides all this, we are sure, that the *Greek Churches* have a much more uncontested *Succession* than the *Latins*: So that a *Succession* cannot direct us: And if it is necessary to seek out the *Doctrines* that are universally received; this is not possible for a private Man to know. So that in Ignorant Countries, where there is little Study, the People have no other certainty concerning their Religion, but what they take from their *Curate* and *Confessor*: since they cannot examine what is generally received. So that it must be confessed that all the Arguments that are brought for the necessity of a constant infallible Judge, turn against all those of the *Church of Rome*, that do not acknowledge the *Infallibility* of the *Pope*: for if he is not *Infallible*, they have no other Judge, that can pretend to it. It were also easy to shew, that some *Doctrines* have been as Universally received in some *Ages*, as they have been rejected in others; which shews, that the *Doctrine* of the present *Church* is not alwayes a sure measure. For five *Ages* together, the *Doctrine* of the *Popes* Power to depose *Heretical Princes* was received without the least Opposition: and this cannot be doubted by any that knows what has been the State of the *Church* since the End of the eleventh *Century*: & yet I believe, few *Princes* would allow this, notwithstanding all the concurring Authority of so many *Ages* to fortify it. I could carry this into a great many other Instances, but I single out this, because it is a point in which *Princes* are naturally extream sensible.

Upon the whole Matter, it can never enter into my mind, that God, who has made Man a Creature, that naturally enquires and reasons, and that feels as sensible a pleasure when

he can give himself a good account of his actions, as one that sees, does perceive in comparison to a blind man that is led about; and that this God, that has also made *Religion* on design to perfect this humane Nature; and to raise it to the utmost height to which it can arrive, has contrived it to be dark, and to be so much beyond the penetration of our Faculties, that we cannot find out his mind in those things that are necessary for our Salvation: and that the *Scriptures*, that were writ by plain men, in a very familiar stile, and address without any discrimination to the Vulgar, should become such an unintelligible Book in these Ages, that we must have an *Infalible* Judge to expound it: and when I see not only *Popes*, but even some Bodies that pass for *General Councils*, have so expounded many passages of it, and have wrested them so visibly, that none of the *Modern Writers* of that Church pretend to excuse it, I say I must freely own to you, that when I find I need a *Commentary* on dark passages, these will be the last persons to whom I will address myself for it. Thus you see how fully I have opened my mind to you in this matter; I have gone over a great deal of ground in as few Words as is possible, because hints I know are enough

for you; I thank God, these Considerations do fully satisfy me, and I will be infinitely joyed, if they have the same effect on you.

I am yours:

**T**HIS Letter came to London with the return of the first Post after his late Majesties Papers were sent into the Country; some that saw it, liked it well, and wished to have it publick, and the rather, because the Writer did not so entirely confine himself to the Reasons that were in those Papers, but took the whole Contraversy to task in a little compass, and yet with a great variety of Reflections. And this way of examining the whole Matter, without following those Papers word for word, or the finding more faults than the common concern of this Cause required, seemed more agreeing to the respect that is due to the Dead, and more particularly to the Memory of so great a Prince; but other Considerations made it not so easy nor so advisable to procure a License for the Printing this Letter; it has been kept in private hands till now; those who have boasted much of the Shortness of the late Kings Papers, and of the length of the Answers that have been made to them, will not find so great a disproportion between them and this Answer to them.

F I N I S.